

# State of the Nations

## 'A Country's Fiber'

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CPYRGHT

### Washington

Helmuth von Moltke was a German aristocrat who participated in the unsuccessful attempt to free Germany from Adolf Hitler in the closing period of the last big war.

We are indebted to John J. McCloy (in the June issue of the *Atlantic Monthly*) for the following glimpse into the retrospective thoughts of this prominent and responsible German citizen in his final days in prison before he was executed by the Nazis:

"He constantly made the point that individuals or demagogues from time to time appear and abuse the power they achieve. This happens in every nation. What distinguishes the more enlightened nations from others, according to Von Moltke, is how the privileged elements of society react to such abuse. And by 'privileged' he meant primarily the educated and successful. That is the test of a country's fiber.

"In a healthy society, protection of liberty and the maintenance of decent public administration must be stimulated and guarded from the top. If the privileged groups grow lethargic, indifferent, apologetic, or fearful, the danger signals are up and the consequences can become disastrous."

I cannot recall ever reading a more succinct or complete explanation of Hitler's rise to power in Germany. The educated and the successful elements in German society were, "lethargic, indifferent, apologetic, or fearful" during the period of Hitler's rise to power, and it was their failure to provide leadership to the public against Hitler which allowed that German demagogue to become master of Germany and then lead his

country into a disastrous war which roused the Soviet bear from his Asiatic den and left it to this day sitting solidly upon all of Eastern Europe, including East Germany.

One can only reflect with the deepest sorrow on what civilization would almost certainly have been spared if the "educated and successful" elements of German society had been alert, attentive, wise, and courageous in the late 'twenties and early 'thirties instead of being "lethargic, indifferent, apologetic, and fearful." It was, in fact, the abdication of the German "educated and successful" before Hitler's challenge which cleared the way for Hitler's rise to power.

But if we accept Von Moltke's definition of the test of a healthy society, then the time has come when it can with some confidence be asserted that the United States today is a healthy society, for many of its "educated and successful" citizens are engaged actively in doing what they can for "the protection of liberty and the maintenance of decent public administration." This task is being "stimulated and guarded from the top."

There was a phase in the rise of Senator Joseph R. McCarthy when most of those speaking out against his methods and his acquisition of political power were political "left wingers" and journalists of what the senator called the "bleeding heart, liberal" school of thought. But those times have passed.

Not by the furthest stretch of the imagination could Norman Armour be included in any such classifications; or Mr. McCloy, or John W. Davis. These are leaders of opinion by education, inheritance, and success. They are

conservatives by political persuasion. They are in the forefront of the rising effort to protect liberty and maintain decent public administration in the United States, and there are many more like them who have taken service and distinguished themselves in that service.

The United States does not have a formalized aristocracy, but like any healthy society it has men who have won leadership and acquired responsibility by education and success. The forces which have mobilized themselves to say that Senator McCarthy shall not become the dominant political power in their country now include them in their ranks.

They include also such other distinguished names as the following:

Thomas E. Dewey, Governor of New York.

Harold E. Stassen, former Governor of Minnesota.

Allen W. Dulles, director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Nathan M. Pusey, president of Harvard University.

Joseph C. Grew, former Ambassador to Japan.

Paul G. Hoffman, chairman of the board of Studebaker.

Erwin N. Griswold, dean of the Harvard Law School.

Dwight D. Eisenhower, President of the United States.

Adlai E. Stevenson, former Governor of Illinois.

The list is very much longer. Any reader of current news can add scores. They include most of the top educators, most of the leading members of the clergy, and increasing numbers of bankers, businessmen, and industrialists.

It cannot be said that in the United States of today the privileged groups are "lethargic, indifferent, apologetic, or fearful."